THE

LIFE

OF

Mrs. ROBERTSON,

(A Tale of Truth as well as of Sorrow)

WHO, THOUGH A

Grand-Daughter of CHARLES II.

HAS BEEN REDUCED,

BY A VARIETY OF VERY UNCOMMON EVENTS,

From ſplendid Affluence to the greateſt Poverty.

AND,

AFTER HAVING BURIED NINE CHILDREN,

IS OBLIGED,

At the age of Sixty-Seven,

To earn a ſcanty Maintenance for herſelf and two Orphan Grand-Children,

By teaching EMBROIDERY, FILLIGREE, and the Art of making ARTIFICIAL FLOWERS.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

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Maſter Alcock.

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Mrs. Boſwell, *Bath.*

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Miſs L. Crauford.
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Mrs. Watſon.

Lady unknown.
Miſs .....

MADAM,

YOU requeſt me to write a *Narrative* of my life. Uneducated as I have been, how ſhall I attempt ſuch a taſk?—— Beſides my life has been a life of ſorrow, on which my mind looks back with pain. But your requeſt is a command to me: and I know you will forgive the thouſand imperfections of my ſtyle.——When I firſt entered life, education was judged of little conſequence to a female; in thoſe days it was thought ſufficient for a woman to acquire a knowledge of domeſtic œconomy, and the uſe of her needle; and you will ſee hereafter, madam, that it was to my own natural taſte for reading, and for the elegant arts, that I am indebted for the few accompliſhments which I ſince have acquired.

I am a Grand Daughter of King Charles IId. My father was born in Windſor caſtle, towards the cloſe of the reign of that Prince, his mother being a daughter of the D——

family, a name too much diſtinguiſhed to appear in the ſame narrative with mine; but which in confidence (were it required) I ſhould not object to reveal.

By the King's order my father was committed to the care of one Mr. Gibſon, maſter of the mint in Edinburgh; a worthy man, and of the ſociety of Quakers. My father's ſurname was Swan, having received that name from his nurſe, who was wife of a gunner belonging to the caſtle. When young he married a rich woman of the name of Ramſay; and at her death being in poſſeſſion of a conſiderable property, he made his addreſſes to Anne Huntingdon, a lady of Carliſle; who, (in conſideration of his ſuperior fortune) with ſome reluctance, gave her conſent; for my father was then in his 63d, and ſhe only in her 22d year. By his firſt wife he had 12 children, who all died in their infancy.—— I have been told that the dutcheſs of Hamilton, after her lord had loſt his head, would never permit more than one chair to be in her room, leſt any one ſhould ſit down in her preſence; but when my father viſited her, ſhe called for a ſecond to do honour to the blood in his veins.

My

My father had ſix children by his young wife, beſides myſelf. I was born the 2d of October, 1724; a younger brother and ſiſter, and myſelf, were all that remained of my father's numerous family, when he ſuddenly died, in the year 1730, being 72 years of age.

His fortune had been much impaired by a variety of loſſes, yet he left his widow in comfortable circumſtances, and us not ill provided for. I felt my father's loſs very ſenſibly, having (like little Benjamin of old) been the darling of his heart, and the pride of his age. My dear father's affection had rendered him blind to my faults; whilſt he flattered my follies, and excited my vanity, by perpetually reminding me that I was the grand daughter of a king. His dependants were not unmindful of his fondneſs, and of his infirmity; they ſoon found that the ſureſt way to his favour, was by addreſſing his darling child with the reſpect, and almoſt the honours of royalty; ſo that by his ſervants, his tenants, and all the inferior inhabitants of the country, and even by our equals, I was never approached without the title of *my Lady*. My mother was ſoon conſoled for his loſs: ſhe had not

reached her 30th year, and about this time a plan was ſettled for eſtabliſhing a linen manufactory at Ormeſton; and Mr. Alexander Chriſtie, with his brother, and others, engaged in it. This Mr. Alexander Chriſtie was a handſome, and portly man. My mother, whoſe inclinations (I have already ſaid) had not fixed her firſt choice, would now pleaſe herſelf. Mr. Chriſtie propoſed marriage to her, and ſhe readily conſented, altho' it was but a few months after my father's deceaſe; ſo that my mother was married to her ſecond huſband, in the ſame year that ſhe was deprived of her firſt.

At this time I was ſix years old; but already knowing that I was the grand child of a king, my little mind ſwelled with the idea. I refuſed to call my new parent father, tho' he treated me with parental kindneſs; and I was too proud to join the children of a little neighbouring ſchool, to which I was ordered to go: I retired unſeen to a cloſet, which I called my own; laid out the little money I could get in paint and paper; and thus early, and without any miſtreſs but kind nature, began to practiſe myſelf in embroidery, drawing,

ing, making flowers, and various other elegant works of fancy: arts which ever after continued the amuſements of my leiſure in proſperity, and to which I am indebted for an unfailing reſource, during a long, and painful ſeries of adverſe fortune. After ſome years we left Glaſgow, (to which, on the ſecond marriage of my mother we had retired) and ſettled at Perth, in 1736. Near this place my father purchaſed large tracts of land, in order to eſtabliſh other linen manufactories: and here we lived in eaſe, in affluence, and I may juſtly ſay, in profuſion. Surrounded by the awful mountains, and majeſtic foreſts of Perthſhire, encircled alſo by its foaming rivers, and romantic glens, my contemplative mind, and (may I be permitted to ſay alſo) my luxuriant fancy, enjoyed the moſt ſublime emotions—the moſt elegant delights. Forgive me, madam, if my imagination involuntarily dwells with enthuſiaſm on thoſe enchanting ſcenes; where, ſeparated from the world, and unfettered by its follies and its forms, we lived like the patriarchs of old, in a land of milk and honey, encompaſſed only by our flocks, and our families—our herds and our hills. But alas! our happineſs (even in this

paradiſe)

paradiſe) was incomplete. Like the innocent inhabitants of Eden, one evil ſpirit found means to interrupt our repoſe; my mother's huſband, (whom I ever refus'd to call my father) poſſeſſing a depraved inclination, and a vulgar mind, felt no pleaſure but in ſcenes of diſſipation, and folly; he frequented thoſe few towns that were in reach of our retirement, preferring the rude revelry of riot, to the ſacred ſilence of philoſophic ſolitude; often returning like a Bacchanal to prophane thoſe ſcenes, which ſhould have been conſecrated to contemplation, and to wiſdom. Mr. Chriſtie's intemperance interrupted the happineſs of my mother; and though it alienated her affections from her huſband, it ſeemed to unite them more ſtrongly to *me*: I devoted myſelf entirely to afford her conſolation, by endeavouring to diſſipate her deſponding thoughts: I was the only friend to whom ſhe unboſomed her ſecret ſorrows; my young heart entered warmly into her intereſts, partaking all her griefs. I loved my mother with a ſincere attachment, and had nearly fallen a victim to her ſufferings: my health daily declined, and *my* caſe was now conſidered of more importance than hers: we conſented

ſented with mutual tears to a temporary ſeparation, and I was ſent by way of relaxation to viſit my grandfather, and my uncle doctor Huntington of Carliſle. I was met here by my uncle doctor Huntington from Gainſborough. None of the ten children of my grandfather had married but my mother; ſo that it may eaſily be ſuppoſed I was a favourite in ſuch a family; but the time being afterwards protracted from various cauſes, it was near two years before I returned. During that viſit, which proved one of the moſt happy periods of my life, I formed a friendſhip with a young gentleman of uncommon merit; a young phyſician, ſon to doctor H———; and perhaps it may appear ſtill more uncommon to ſay, that at ſo early an age, and with affections diſengaged, tho' he won the utmoſt degree of my good will and good wiſhes, yet he never gained my love.

Soon after my return from Carliſle, I was informed that this young man was dead, and that his death was imputed to his attachment for me: this circumſtance preyed upon my mind, and that gloomy caſt of features which marks the child of ſorrow, began from this time to be immoveably fixed.

My

My return from Carliſle was in the year 1744; ſoon after that time I became acquainted with a Mr. B—, a young officer of good family, and of great expectations; but it was the elegance of his manners, with the charms of his mind, that vanquiſhed my heart: our mutual attachment encreaſed with our acquaintance; he paid his addreſſes in form, and my parents promoted the connection.—Mr. B— was the younger ſon of a gentleman in the county of Durham, who was poſſeſſed of eight thouſand a year; his elder brother too was in ſo declining a ſtate, that my lover was the only apparent heir to his father's extenſive poſſeſſions. Mr. B—'s ſecond ſon died at this time, his eldeſt, who had lead a life of folly and diſſipation, was given over by the phyſicians at Bath; Capt. B— wrote me this account, and added, what was that fortune to him if not ſhared with the woman of his heart. I am not conſcious, however, that intereſt had any ſhare in fixing my choice; and indeed the alliance of nobility could ſcarcely have flattered my vanity, knowing myſelf to be the grand daughter of a king.

Every

Every thing was now preparing to celebrate my marriage with Mr. B—, but in this interval his regiment was ordered into Flanders; he was compelled to march at the head of his ſoldiers—he fought for his country—and *died*, in reinforcing Ghent.

This diſappointment in my firſt attachment, encreaſed my natural propenſity to gloom and reflection; and this was ſtill heightened and confirmed, by the horrid ſcenes to which I was a witneſs during the rebellion, in the years 1745 and 1746. Yet I have ſometimes ſince thought, that to theſe ſcenes of horror I am indebted for a firmneſs—perhaps a callofity of mind, which has ſince rendered me leſs vulnerable to the "arrows of outrageous fortune."—I was at Perth during ſeveral engagements with an unruly mob in that neighbourhood; yet my mind being occupied with a ſtill more intereſting ſubject (like Charles the XIIth when a bomb burſt in his chamber) I could ſit, and liſten to the cannons with ſtoical apathy, although it frequently happen'd that every pane of glaſs in every window was demoliſhed in the houſe where I reſided; and a cannon ball once paſſed thro' the bed, in an

apartment next to that in which I was ſleeping. But the many diſmal ſcenes to which I was an eye witneſs during this time, I ſhall paſs over in ſilence; they have been often recorded; and to your gentleneſs, Madam, which vibrates too eaſily at the tale of woe, why ſhould I give unneceſſary pain? my own ſtory is itſelf too heavily laden.

After the rebellion, Lord George Sackville's regiment was quartered at Perth, in which was an officer named Johnſtone; him I often ſaw: he was ſenſible and ſedate, much older in years than myſelf; but my diſpoſition was equally ſerious, and ſentimental with his; I ſoon felt a relief from his converſation; an uncommon ſimilarity of character and opinions, ſoon united us in the bonds of a refined and platonic friendſhip, which by imperceptible gradations ſoftened into a more tender attachment. The image of Mr. B— no longer haunted my imagination, which was now agreeably engaged in the contemplation of my future felicity; for (however impoſſible it might once have appeared) I was now fully ſenſible that my heart had formed not only a *ſecond*, but a ſtill ſtronger attachment. My

mother

mother would readily have conſented to any engagement, likely to have rendered me happy; ſhe promoted our connection; the hour was appointed for our marriage; in three days I was to have been Mrs. Johnſtone:—but, alas! within thoſe three fatal days, *that* regiment alſo was ordered away to the ſiege of Bergen-opzoom. Capt. Johnſtone was very importunate that the ceremony ſhould be performed before he left me; but my friends obſtinately refuſed that I ſhould become (as they ſaid) on the ſame day a wife, & a widow. We however mutually ſign'd a contract; and my lover left me. For ſome time I often heard from him; but ſoon I heard no more. I counted the ſlow hours —I watched the winds in vain! News at laſt came that the ſiege was over, and that the army was returning; but the next poſt informed me, that the tranſport on which Capt. Johnſtone's company had embarked, was windbound; then that it had ſailed; that in the greateſt diſtreſs it had reached England, after a tedious voyage of five months, during which time the whole crew had experienc'd the moſt complicated miſery; and that the two officers who accompanied the men were dead. Alas! Madam, with what horror do I yet look back

to that period! with an anguiſh that cannot be expreſſed I receiv'd the intelligence that my lover was no more. I put on black, and mourn'd for him many months, with every external proof of a ſincere and unaffected ſorrow;—a ſorrow, which (as you will ſee hereafter, Madam) long ſurvived every ſolemn ceremonial of affliction. In the mean time my brother return'd from college with a ſtudent, who had alſo finiſhed his education there.—This young gentleman was the particular friend of my brother, and grandſon to a Mr. Robertſon, the proudeſt man in Perth: the grandſon however inherited not his foible, for he was rational, ſober, and religious. His intimacy with my brother afforded him a frequent introduction to our family; I know not why his affections were ſoon fixed on me—he knew my afflictions, and perhaps he pitied me; and pity, as the poets tell us, "melts the ſoul to love:" as for me, I remained in a ſtate of unſhaken inſenſibility to his addreſſes; but my friends were urgent that I ſhould accept his propoſal; my mother particularly was importunate, thinking (perhaps) that a new and fortunate attachment might obliterate all remembrance of the paſt. With reluctance

(and

(and almoſt with a foreboding mind) was I perſuaded to give my aſſent, feeling only one ſatisfaction—that I was making the ſacrifice to the ardent ſolicitations of a mother, whom I tenderly loved.

It was in the year 1749, that the day was a third time fixed for my marriage; company was invited, and every elegance prepared: and the young people in all the country round, looked forwards to the appointed time as to a jubilee: but my heart was ſad. Harraſſed with my own reflections, and ſinking under affliction, which could be no longer ſuppreſſed, I retired, the day before my marriage, to my own chamber ſoon after tea indulging my ſorrows. My brother ſpent the evening with my other friends, who formed a large company below. Soon after ſupper he received a card, requeſting him immediately to call upon a gentleman juſt arrived in Perth:—how great was his ſurpriſe, in the ſtranger to find my beloved Captain Johnſtone. His letters had been intercepted. He had embarked on board the tranſport—but an unexpected accident had recalled him to land before the veſſel ſailed, and from that time, a ſtrange, and even

romantic

romantic concurrence of unfortunate events had detained him abroad. As you, Madam, have been too happy to have experienced my fate, it is impoſſible that you can form a conception of my feelings, when I found that my lover lived: the night was ſpent in alternate paroxyſms of horror and deſpair; and the utmoſt exertion of my fortitude and philoſophy, was barely ſufficient to ſupport me through the ſucceeding ſcenes, with apparent compoſure. Perhaps it may be conſidered a falſe ſenſe of honour, that preſerved me unſhaken in the engagement I had formed with Mr. Robertſon. The fatal morning arrived: I endeavoured to compoſe my features for the occaſion, and ſuffered myſelf to be adorned with the ornaments of a bride: I was led (like a victim crowned with garlands) to the altar; renouncing forever the man I loved—and entering into the moſt ſolemn engagements to love that man, whom I now conſidered the fatal cauſe of unutterable woe. From the church I was conducted to my huſband's habitation, which for many days exhibited one continued ſcene of feaſting and joy. I alſo endeavoured to put on the exterior of contentment, whilſt my tortured ſoul was convulſed within me.

Had

Had my heart been in uniſon with the ſurrounding ſcenes, I muſt now indeed have been happy; I found my huſband wiſe, virtuous, and ſincere; and his ample fortune put me in poſſeſſion of every elegance that is eſſential to the comfort of life; I had a genteel eſtabliſhment of ſervants; an honourable (tho' not an immenſe) houſe, containing twenty apartments, and it was furniſhed in a taſte ſuperior to the uſual ſtile of thoſe times: I remember to have been almoſt the firſt perſon who poſſeſſed at that time, and in that part of the country, an entire tea equipage of plate, with every other ſuitable accompaniment.—The rank which I held, together with my ſuperior deſcent, introduced me amongſt all the neighbouring nobility, who viſited me in their turn, and in particular I was connected with the old Ducheſs of Athol, who never after (not even in my adverſity) withdrew her regard. Yet even theſe flattering ſcenes could not expel the dæmon of melancholy. I know not whether it increaſed, or if it diminiſhed my affliction, that Captain Johnſtone continued his friendſhip for me, and many months after often viſited in our family; his preſence ſoothed my cares, but my ſorrows were redoubled by his abſence. Thus,

Thus, Madam, did I exiſt thro' the firſt year of my married ſtate—a mourning bride, and a melancholy wife!—I was now preparing for a little ſtranger who was likely to encreaſe our family; one day as I ſat muſing alone, Capt. Johnſtone unexpectedly appeared, and falling upon one knee before me, he put into my hand a ſplendid coral, which he begg'd I would preſent to the young ſtranger, whom (he told me) his happineſs required he ſhould never behold: Captain Johnſtone left the room before I had courage to reply; and although near fifty years have ſince paſſed away, I never from that fatal period have once enjoy'd the melancholy ſatisfaction of beholding capt. Johnſtone more.—If my friend (for I dare no longer call him lover) be yet on earth, may he have regain'd that peace which I have ſo long outlived!—or, if in heaven—may he enjoy there the reward of his conſtancy, and of his virtues, unconſcious of the woes which his fatal affection has entailed on this ſad, ſorrowing heart! With reſpect however, to what the world calls proſperity, you ſee me, Madam, at this time baſking in the brighteſt ſun-ſhine of my days. Every ſucceeding year added to our family, and to our comforts: altho' I was the grand-

child

child of a king, and perhaps too much flattered by that dignity, yet never did I conſider myſelf ſuperior to the duties of a mother; my children indeed were my delight. I nurſed the infants, and preſided over the education of my eldeſt daughter and ſon. The ſhort intervals of leiſure, which my duties allowed, were chiefly devoted to thoſe favourite arts which I ever had cultivated with delight; I ſtudied nature with a view to imitate her moſt elegant productions,—a new creation roſe beneath my hands,—I formed flowers of art—I painted, and I embroidered; ſo that (like Penelope of old) I charmed away with works of fancy, the tedious hours, during the abſence of my lord. As for Mr. Robertſon, if he had not before marriage ſucceeded in fixing my affections, at leaſt his unremitted attentions afterwards excited my warmeſt gratitude; and the conſiſtency of his conduct could not fail of fixing my eſteem; I reſpected, if I did not love him; and my endeavours to make *him* happy, contributed in a great meaſure towards rendering *me* ſo likewiſe. My ſolicitudes and cares became transferred from myſelf to other objects; preſent comforts alſo ſoftened the rigours of my former fate, and I

began to contemplate our future proſpects with hope, and with confidence. But, alas! I was deluded like an unſkilful mariner, who puts his truſt in the ſmooth (but deceitful) ſurface of the inconſtant deep: in the mutability of life, as in the viciſſitudes of the ocean, who can tell what to-morrow may bring forth! Let thoſe who have gained the giddy heights of proſperity, remember that a precipice is near, and learn from my fatal experience to "tremble at the gulf that yawns below."— With reſpect to myſelf, Madam, when I the leaſt anticipated misfortune, behold me plunged into a "ſea of troubles:" and from henceforth you will ſee me only a wretched wanderer, thro' a vale of tears.

Sickneſs now began to viſit us in its moſt hideous forms; our eldeſt and indeed (at that time) our only ſon, was ſeized with a dreadful and a mortal diſeaſe; the loſs of this darling child prey'd upon my ſpirits, and being at that time nurſe to the youngeſt, my bodily ſtrength was rapidly declining. One day as I ſat muſing with the infant in my arms, I was overſpread (as it were) with a ſudden and preternatural horror: I flew to my huſband (who was ſitting

ting with a book in the garden) and throwing myſelf into his arms, I exclaim'd in an agony, "Oh! Mr. Robertſon, I have loſt my reaſon!" From that moment, Madam, I continued for two long years in a ſituation, which, if it were in my power, I would not deſcribe: my imagination cannot bear to dwell upon the diſmal ſcene, the bare recollection, even at this remote period, chills me with unutterable horror. My huſband (who attended me with ſincere affection) ſeemed to ſink alſo under the weight of my affliction; he ſoothed me with his care, and watched over my ſleeping hours; but his own health and ſpirits were inadequate to the burden of his miſery; he became incapable of all exertion, and leaving his other concerns, devoted his time, his fortune, and all his cares to me alone. The buſineſs in which my huſband was engaged, was now conſigned to the care of an incompetent partner. My huſband was partner with Mr. Brown, and their bills ſigned "Brown, Robertſon, and Co." the houſe or buſineſs had long gone in that name, Provoſt Brown being grandfather to both.—I know not accurately (for I was incapable of knowing) the various complications of all

thoſe diſaſtrous events which precipitated us into ruin; but a bankruptcy enſued, with all its attendant train of horrors; and the failure of a capital houſe at the ſame time, with which our's was connected in London, involved my unfortunate huſband in the ſame melancholy fate. Thus began the ſad ſeries of our future ſorrows, in the year 1756. I do really believe, Madam, that it was the ſudden ſhock of this unexpected misfortune, that firſt rouſed me from the lethargy into which I was fallen. I gradually recovered; and thro' the kindneſs of my father, Mr. Robertſon was put into the diſtillery buſineſs, which (with better health) he might have eaſily conducted; but his ſpirits were too much broken to enter into new cares; the undertaking did not ſucceed, and he was now thrown into priſon for an old debt. It was now my turn to comfort the afflicted; I ſhared in all his ſorrows—I watched by his ſide—and nothing ſhould have ſeparated me from my kind huſband, tho' condemn'd to the diſmal ſolitude of a dark jail, but the hope of releaſing him by my induſtry. In a newſpaper, which I had taken to amuſe my huſband in his confinement, I ſaw an advertiſement for a proper perſon to conduct a new

tavern

tavern which was building by the free maſons, next to their lodge in Aberdeen. I ſhew'd it to my huſband, and begged his permiſſion to undertake it; but he wiſely foreſaw how entirely I was unqualified for ſuch a laborious office, accuſtomed as I had been to all the conveniences, and elegancies of life: and in truth, a lady of quality might have been conſidered as well qualified as myſelf to have become the miſtreſs of an inn: I was however firm in my purpoſe, and extorted his reluctant conſent. I hired a veſſel to carry my furniture to Aberdeen, for his creditors took none of it from us, and I was ſupplied with more by my relations, and taking leave of the forlorn priſoner, I ſet out northward in 1762.

The difficulties, which crowded round me, inſpired me with courage. At firſt I ſucceeded in this new undertaking, for my tavern was much frequented; and I had it ſoon in my power to diſcharge many of my huſband's debts, and to releaſe him from confinement, which more than compenſated for every toil and every care. He joined me at Aberdeen, where we once more enjoyed a gleam of tranquility; tho' fallen, never to riſe again to our former

former rank in life. I yet enjoyed ſome comforts in my humble ſtation: it is one of the advantages of adverſity, that it renders the mind ſuſceptible of the affliction of others. I at leaſt enjoyed in this ſituation, the luxury of doing ſome good: if I poſſeſſed not wealth to cloath the naked, I yet allow'd myſelf the pleaſure of feeding the hungry, for nobody went empty away from my door; and to many a dependant heir have I adminiſtered his daily bread, who at this time is wanting only in the will to requite me.——How deiceitful are human proſpects!—a gentleman from Norway who lodged in our houſe, unhappily falling aſleep as he was reading in bed, the curtains took fire, and the flames communicating with other parts of the furniture and buildings, a great ſhare of our poſſeſſions were conſumed. The unhappy ſtranger alſo, falling a ſacrifice to his own imprudence, with all that belong'd to him, we were obliged to bear the expence of his funeral; which was however, but a very trifling addition to the weight of our other alarming and ſerious loſſes occaſioned by this calamity; which was ſoon after ſucceeded by a ſecond of the ſame kind. Another dreadful fire which happened in the

neighbourhood

neighbourhood ſhortly after, conſuming the greateſt part of our property which before had eſcaped, we again were reduced to the brink of deſtruction; and the proprietors, when I was re-eſtabliſhed, by a ſeries of oppreſſions finally compelled me to quit, having ſeized and ſold my wines and furniture, though my debt to them was inconſiderable. We return'd to Perth, but alas! how fallen! I attempted to do ſomething for my family, firſt by teaching ſchool, for which charge however the diſtreſs of my mind finally diſqualified me. Behold, Madam, the grand-child of a king, reduced to the painful neceſſity of relying for her ſupport upon that claſs, with which ſhe was formerly too proud to aſſociate.

The ſchool failing, I attempted to ſell a few millinery articles: and in this ſituation, I became the inſtrument of ſome good to my ſex. An infamous attorney (tho' I was a married woman) caſt me into priſon for a ſmall debt. My huſband and myſelf were ſitting peaceably at our frugal ſupper, when the ruffians rudely entered, and ſeized me.—I had then an infant which I could not leave:—ſo, taking the child in my arms, (with a kind of deſperate reſolu-

tion

tion which misfortune inſpires) I boldly promiſed to follow them. They led me into a damp and diſmal dungeon; but I cannot ſay that it was *not inhabited*; for the place was occupied in every part by innumerable *rats*, the only creature that chills me with horror! Some clean ſtraw was ſtrewed over the floor, to keep the wet from my feet; but my chief apprehenſion was on account of my innocent child that I nouriſhed, leſt it ſhould ſuffer from the noiſome vapours that iſſued like ſmoke from the walls. In this ſituation I wrote my caſe:—the fifteen judges aſſembled, and awarding me 50l. as ſome compenſation for the injury, they ſentenced Mr. G. the attorney to infamy. Releaſed from confinement, I continued my little buſineſs, oppreſſed with many a domeſtic care, and foreboding apprehenſion; among which, it was by no means the leaſt, that my eldeſt daughter—my majeſtic Anna, was now riſing as a beauty into fame. It is not without tears, Madam, that I yet recall to my remembrance her lovely image, at that time the emblem of innocence and every youthful charm: it was a general obſervation, that in my Anna's features might be diſtinctly traced thoſe of our unfortunate family,

family, for ſhe was the living image of Mary, queen of Scots—equally diſtinguiſhed for her beauty, and (as you will ſee hereafter, Madam) for her misfortunes! In ſuch circumſtances, it was only with ſorrow that I could contemplate that beaming beauty, which, in our original ſphere, might have nobly diſtinguiſhed my daughter as the grand-child of a king.—My youngeſt girl (who was call'd Minia) was leſs beautiful, but her gentle and unoffending nature proved the conſolation of my deſponding heart. We had alſo two little ſons, who divided our attention and our love. Thus, Madam, you ſee me oppreſſed with many cares, "but the winds are tempered to the ſhorn lamb." Thro' every ſcene of ſorrow, I had found an unfailing reſource in my brother's ſympathy and kind affection: he reſided in Perth, and it was his kindneſs that conſoled, his counſel that directed me; and his bounty that ſupplied my wants. It was alſo an additional comfort, that my ſiſter reſided within our reach: ſhe had married a man in affluence, and they lived within a mile of Perth, in a large houſe that was the family ſeat of Lord Oliphant.

I was alſo ſtill honoured with the friendſhip of the Dutcheſs of Athol, who often ſent for me to viſit her; but one of thoſe viſits had nearly put an end to my miſery, and my life. It was in the depth of a ſevere winter, and the Dutcheſs had ſent for me to ſpend a few days at Dunkeld. I return'd (with a maid ſervant and our youngeſt child, who had accompanied me) in the duke's carriage. The river Almond was frozen over with a thick ice, which we had croſſed in ſafety a few days before; but as we were repaſſing the river on our way back to Perth, the ice burſt with a terrible craſh, and the horſes and carriage were plunged into the ſtream. It was a ſhallow part of the river, yet I need not ſay with what difficulty we were extricated, nor in what ſituation we were drawn from the flood. After ſpending ſome hours in a neighbouring cottage to recover, we again attempted to purſue our ride to Perth, which was not very diſtant: Yet in this ſhort interval, we were attacked by a highwayman, and narrowly eſcaped with our lives. Thus, Madam, thro' life have I been purſued in every undertaking (whether great or ſmall) by the impoiſoned arrows of unrelenting fortune: but indeed had I died on this occaſion, my death

death would have preſerved me from many a future pang. Some advantages however accompany even adverſity—if it ſcatters our aſſociates, it diſtinguiſhes our friends: the ſupercilious contempt that I experienced from many who were once my inferiors, rendered my ſenſibility more acute to the inſtances of gratitude from thoſe (who like the widow in the goſpel) had only their mite to give. One unfortunate gentleman, Sir John S——, of G——ly, I ſhall ever remember, and the recollection has drawn from me many a tear of gratitude. I ſerved him in my proſperity, when he ſtood in need of aſſiſtance, and now he ſold his watch, and every valuable he poſſeſſed, ſending me the ſmall ſum he had thus raiſed for my ſupport, at a time when the few cloaths that covered me could ſcarcely be called my own. I did not conſider it as a debt due to me, but as money given me out of charity, which at that time hurt my pride, and the method he took to raiſe it ſenſibly affected my feelings.

I now printed the *young ladies ſchool of arts*, which, at the requeſt of ſome female friends of diſtinction, I had compoſed at

Aberdeen, and went over to Edinburgh to inſpect the preſs. Here my eldeſt daughter, (whom I ſeldom left) became acquainted with Dr. Wilſon, nephew to a phyſician of that name; a diſtinguiſhed character: he had travelled thro' Europe and Aſia—and in a viſit to China, had been by a variety of ſtrange accidents introduced to the empreſs, whom he cured of a dangerous diſeaſe. Young Dr. Wilſon was heir to this uncle, who poſſeſſed a large fortune; and I appeal to you, Madam, as to a fond mother, whether I had not every apparent reaſon to rejoice in ſuch a connection for my child; I conſulted Mr. Robertſon, (whom I had left in Perth) and I ſoon after married our beloved Anna, not only with her father's approbation, but to his delight. But alas! Madam, "we ſee here (indeed) as thro' a glaſs, darkly;" and my accumulated misfortunes (or rather the various unexpected turns of my evil fortune) have at leaſt taught me one act of wiſdom—it is that of joining only in the Lacedæmonian prayer—"Give us, Oh Lord! the things that are good for us, altho' we aſk them not; and remove from us thoſe that are evil, although we were to aſk them!" ſo incompetent are we to foreſee, or to judge of the future.

Our

Our daughter (the chief object of my care) being ſettled to our ſatisfaction; Mr. Robertſon very naturally wiſhed to partake in the happineſs of our child: the time was fixed for him to join our circle, and I may truly ſay, that I anticipated the day with delight. If I never loved my huſband with enthuſiaſm,—yet his tenderneſs—his attachment, and his afflictions, had long united my heart to his, in the moſt indiſſoluble bonds not only of intereſt, but of ſympathy and of affection. Having alſo been in ſome degree the cauſe (altho' the innocent cauſe) of his misfortunes, I enjoyed the flattering hopes, that by this new alliance I might have proved the means of re-eſtabliſhing his comfort, and improving his ſhattered fortune. My ſon-in-law was not poſſeſſed of preſent riches, but he had great, even extravagant expectations; and my active imagination formed him at once benevolent and generous: I beheld our infants provided for, and ourſelves raiſed by his kindneſs from obſcurity. Soothed by theſe dreams of future delights, Madam, I could not help contraſting the pleaſure of our next meeting with the gloom in which I had parted from my huſband. The day on which we expected him appeared—the morning roſe

in

in brightneſs—and my ſad ſoul emerging from its uſual weight of ſorrow, began to feel the reviving influence of returning hope: but alas! Madam, the day that I ſo fondly anticipated, paſſed over without joy—no Mr. Robertſon appeared—the night was ſpent in anxiety; but the next morning a meſſenger was announced from Perth—It was indeed a *meſſenger*, but *not* of joy—it was the meſſenger of woe unutterable!—a meſſenger informing me that my huſband was no more! Is there on earth another being who has been thus overwhelmed! *She* may conceive my deſpair; but to thoſe, Madam, who have never paſſed thro' ſuch a ſcene of horror, all words are vain—I will not do myſelf the injuſtice to attempt a deſcription of feelings that human language cannot deſcribe. It was winter, and Mr. Robertſon had undertaken the journey on foot; but (like the traveller deſcribed in Thomſon) the darkneſs had unexpectedly overtaken him—he loſt his way in the trackleſs waſte of a wide common—"The winds blew, the ſleet deſcended"—and the next morning my dear huſband was found amidſt the drifted ſnow, a ſtiff and lifeleſs corſe. For three ſucceeding months, Madam, I alſo was reduced to a ſtate of ſtupor, nearly as inanimate as that of death. Mr.

Mr. Robertſon's death in the year 1771—that awful period of affliction! forms another important epocha in my narrative. Dr. Wilſon, my daughter's huſband (like many other dependant heirs) expected much, but he poſſeſſed little. What could I do?—I collected the ſmall ruins of my fortune, and advertiſed my talents: the ſkill I had acquired in my favorite arts, might now, I thought, be rendered ſerviceable to my family. The Dutcheſs of Gordon read the advertiſement, and with the conſent of her Lord, ſent for me to the caſtle. Here I paſſed four months, and could have ſpent my life in peace; but the fate of my children was near to my heart, and called me again to Edinburgh: my brother too expected to meet me there, as he annually ſpent ſome weeks, about that time in our capital. I had long experienced his generoſity, and I depended on his friendſhip, which had been often tried, but never found wanting. Inſtead however of my beloved brother, I was met only by a letter informing me, that he was then no more. The ſhock ſtruck my heart: I ſet out for Perth in order to pay the laſt reſpects to his memory, and on the road I met the hearſe, which was bearing to the grave, the beſt

beſt of huſbands—the beſt of fathers—the beſt of brothers—and the beſt of friends! My cup of affliction ſeemed filled to the brim, for 'till now I could confide, ſhould their mother alſo die, that my brother would become a father to my little ones.

I now returned again to Edinburgh, practiſing and teaching the various arts I underſtood. Some time after, Mr. Wilſon (the uncle of my ſon-in-law) died; his fortune he had divided in a variety of legacies, ſo that Dr. Wilſon inherited but a ſmall part of his uncle's poſſeſſions: nevertheleſs, my ſon-in-law might now be conſidered a rich man. Notwithſtanding, Madam, that every ſource of happineſs had failed, as it reſpected myſelf—yet, as far as it may be conſidered that we again live in our children, I had now every thing to hope, as it reſpected (at leaſt) the flattering proſpects of my eldeſt daughter: poſſeſſed of every perſonal grace, and of every elegant accompliſhment, I cannot think of her dear image without enthuſiaſm; for art, and nature had poured upon my Anna their choiceſt gifts! She was accompliſhed as fair, and ſhe was the faireſt of thouſands!—and now,

now, Madam, behold this idol of my heart brought forth (like a gem) from obſcurity, blazing in her proper ſphere; a grace to her family! an ornament to the world! Where is the mother, Madam, who could behold with inſenſibility, the riſing ſplendour of ſuch a child?—worthy indeed of being the deſcendant of a King! But alas!—how viſionary are our expectations!—how great the "deceit-"fulneſs of riches"! Like medicinal poiſons, which according to the ſkill of the practitioner, are either beneficial, or fatal to man—ſo is it the application (and by no means the mere poſſeſſion) of riches which conſtitutes their intrinſic value to thoſe on whom they are beſtowed: but unfortunately, Madam, Dr. Wilſon, (whom I will no longer ſpeak of as my ſon) was not bleſſed with a mind capable of ſuch a diſtinction; he had ever poſſeſſed a taſte for diſſipation, and being now poſſeſſed alſo of the means, behold him plunging at once into the tide of faſhion, and of folly.—He was become daily more inſenſible to the charms of his lovely wife; and as ſhe had borne him no children, he now began to treat her with a mortifying contempt:—to regain his loſt affections, ſhe was induced to flatter his

follies, and thus by gradual and inſenſible degrees became herſelf drawn into the vortex of diſſipation; ſo dangerous is it to countenance evil, even with a view to future good! As for Dr. Wilſon, he might truly be ſaid (like the inhabitants of Circe's iſland) to have been converted into a monſter by vice. His habitation was a houſe of riot, into which (like the unclean ſpirit in the parable) he introduced other unclean ſpirits, even worſe than himſelf: in a fit of intemperance and frenzy, he even offered to reſign his wife to one of his companions—who, Madam, could be attached to ſuch a huſband? from an abhorrence of vice in the abſtract, my daughter was inſenſibly led to abhor her huſband alſo, with whoſe image it was ſo intimately connected: ſhe was introduced to all his lewd companions! and the young man to whom he had offered her before, artfully availing himſelf of her unhappy ſituation, exerted every means to obtain her affections. Dr. Wilſon having almoſt ruined his fortune by a courſe of boundleſs extravagance, was now determined to ſettle in America with the ſmall portion that remained:—alas! Madam, think with what anguiſh my daughter looked forwards to the horror of her

ſituation,

ſituation, conveyed as it were, to diſtant worlds, without a mother! and without a friend! The artful villain who had been ſo long endeavouring to undermine her virtue in vain, now availed himſelf of her critical ſituation—and my loſt Anna, forgetful of her family, and her fame—ſuffered herſelf to be carried away from an inſulting tyrant, by an inſinuating lover.

However others might before have thought me degraded; this, Madam, was the firſt time in which I felt myſelf really fallen: I had already ſuffered almoſt every variety of woe; but this, I conſidered my only, as my firſt diſgrace. No longer now (in imitation of my native mountains) could my head be proudly raiſed above the ſtorm: on the contrary, I began to ſuffer what before I could never have conceived—the miſery of ſhame, without a conſciouſneſs of deſerving it. My former affection became converted into abhorrence and rage; and with the true ſpirit of a lady Macbeth, I could have ſacrificed my offspring to my honour.—For one whole year, I knew nothing of her fate, and it was ſix years more, before I again beheld her. Sinking under this

diſgrace, and aſhamed of appearing in the face of day, I reſolved to leave Edinburgh; tho' I had friends there, and was able by my talents to provide for my family. My eldeſt ſon had been taken by a friend, and was apprenticed to Mr. Carr of York; but three children were yet with me: theſe I took—and looking back with a departing ſigh, like our firſt parents when they quitted paradiſe, I bid adieu to my country, the wide world lying before me! Attracted however by my ſon, we proceeded towards York, being determined to eſtabliſh myſelf near him.

And now, Madam, permit me to draw a veil over many of the ſucceeding ſcenes of my life; for overſhadowed as thoſe ſcenes have alſo been by "clouds and darkneſs," yet they afford but a repetition of my former ſufferings, varying chiefly in ſituation, and in time: nor do I wiſh to torture the imagination of another, by preſenting the ghaſtly picture of thoſe hideous forms, in which I have been viſited by poverty—by ſickneſs—and (as far as each child may be conſidered a ſecond ſelf) I may alſo ſay, *by death*. The ſucceeding ſcenes, altho' crowded with much for me to ſuffer, contain

but

but little, Madam, that can entertain you to read. At York, I found employment in the boarding ſchools, particularly, in the line of filligree; which from having been long neglected, appeared like a new art; but I was often in diſtreſs, and was compelled to ſell the few valuables I had about me, to provide neceſſaries for my children: I was now alſo ſeized with a tedious illneſs—confined to my bed, and without reſource, being no longer able to practiſe the arts that ſupported me: In this emergency, a lady's Barcelona handkerchief was brought for me to ornament with a painted border—I was incapable of undertaking it; but my little ſon (altho' wholly unpractiſed in theſe arts) took the handkerchief, and painted it. The public approved his taſte, and other faſhionable ladies in York ſent handkerchiefs, ſhawls, &c. to be painted: and thus untaught, except by nature, my youngeſt ſon with his little hands maintained me. This darling ſon, Madam, could draw before he could read; and before he could ſpeak, he enjoyed the harmony of muſic; and he afterwards honoured his family by his riſing (though ſhort liv'd) fame. It was at this time I learned the death of my mother, who left me the gleanings of her

her diſſipated fortune: Mr. Chriſtie, who died long before her, had left 700l. in the hands of a merchant in Perth, which my mother was to enjoy during her life, and after her death was to have been divided betwixt a brother's children and mine; but the merchant became a bankrupt, and we got a mere trifle for our ſhare. It was alſo during my ſtay at York, that I heard of my unfortunate daughter. Seven years had elapſed, and I was reading the parable of the loſt ſheep: "It is my duty, ſaid I, to go after the one that is loſt." I made all poſſible enquiries, and traced her to Dublin: ſhe was there in ſervice: I wrote to her, and preſſed her to come to me:—my Anna came, but alas! how fallen in beauty, as in virtue!—no longer were her ſmiles, the ſmiles of innocence; her beaming countenance was now no more, the index of an untainted mind; and the unſullied whiteneſs of her ſkin (fair emblem of unſpotted purity) was now concealed by a vile compoſition, prepared to obſcure her ſuperior charms; hardly a veſtige of her former ſelf remained: ſhe had been obliged to ſtain her ſkin with walnut juice, for ſome families, objecting to her beauty, had refuſed to employ her.

After

After remaining a little time at York, my daughter went to Hull, and from thence to Manchester, and to Liverpool, practising the elegant arts she had been taught, with great success. By her persuasion (as I did not enjoy my health at York) I also removed to Manchester, where I staid almost five years, and found many friends.

In the mean time, my daughter had gone to London, and meeting with good encouragement, she sent for her youngest brother and invited me to join her. Dr. Wilson, her husband was dead. I went to London in the year 1782, where I found that Anna was going to marry an Attorney, a man of no extraordinary character; I therefore took lodgings in the Strand for myself and Minia, my youngest daughter. Minia was not so handsome, and accomplished, but she could vie in many things with her eldest sister. A young Midshipman in London, named Clarke, now courted her, and married her: the connexion was by no means pleasing to me; but (as Fielding expresses it) "a moth might as soon be persuaded from the flames of a candle, as the young heart from the object of its love." Soon after

after this marriage, I went to live with my eldeſt daughter, and we were joined by my two ſons. Anna had, (during the boundleſs diſſipation of her firſt huſband) contracted an extravagant turn of mind, and it now ſeemed to encreaſe: however we had buſineſs, chiefly in the arts I have mentioned, and fortune ſeemed to ſmile. My eldeſt ſon was alſo thoughtleſs and extravagant; but his brother was the riſing ſtar of our family; ſedate and prudent, with a ſoul ſuperlatively formed for the finer arts of painting, and of muſic.

My gentle and unoffending Minia, was now to taſte of ſorrow. The huſband ſhe had married could not maintain her: I therefore took a houſe, and with my daughters, Minia opened a ſhop (the firſt of the kind in London) for various works of fancy: and here, Madam, I might have made a ſecond fortune: our ſhop was crowded with nobility, and we were alſo employed in teaching many of the firſt families. His grace the Duke of ——— made us known to Lady Charlotte Finch, who ſent for my daughter to inſtruct the Princeſſes; but there were ſome reaſons which induced her to decline the honour that was offered her.—

Windſor

Windſor caſtle, however, (the place of my father's nativity) is now ornamented with a great variety of this kind of works. How little did my Royal anceſtor foreſee, that his unfortunate Grand-daughter ſhould be reduced, for her daily bread, to decorate thoſe ſcenes of his vices! but my own ſad ſtory ſeems to realize the curſe of old—"That the "wickedneſs of the fathers ſhould be viſited "upon their children, even to the third and "fourth generation." Whilſt I was thus ſucceſsfully eſtabliſhed in my new undertaking, aſſiſted chiefly by my eldeſt daughter, the fatal cancer came, under which ſhe lingered for twelve months, and died miſerably. Thus was my laſt gleam of hope obſcured for ever; and from this time, Madam, you will ſee me rapidly ſinking (never to riſe again) beneath the weight of accumulated affliction. My daughter Minia now alſo drooped; in three years ſhe had borne three children; her delicate conſtitution gave way, and ſhe was ordered to breathe the country air: leaving therefore with me her two eldeſt infants, ſhe went to Southampton. Of theſe infants, the eldeſt died of a putrid fever; and I and my ſon took the infection; when my child returned ſhe

found us in this ſtate; and her own health, I ſaw, was nearly ſpent. However, we got through the winter, and as my ſtrength was returning, I accepted a propoſal to go down to Northampton, to give leſſons to ſome young ladies there.

Minia, with her huſband and children, ſet out with me; but they parted from me at Northampton intending to go further north; they could only reach Leiceſter, to which place I haſtened having heard of her danger; and in a few days ſhe expired in my arms. Thus in the 67th year of my age, in affliction and in poverty, was I left with two infants looking up to me, for education and *bread.*

From Leiceſter I reached Nottingham with difficulty; both my grand-children were with me, and the youngeſt apparently at the point of death; I conveyed it in my arms, but every jolt of the carriage ſeemed to threaten its deſtruction: ſeeing a reputable looking man on foot by the ſide of us, I aſked if he were going the ſame way; and begged of him to come in, that we might ride the more ſteadily. It was not long before an accident happened to one

one of our horſes, which might have proved fatal to us all; and it was this man who ſaved our lives, by extricating us from the carriage. This event ſeemed to realize an opinion I have ſometimes encouraged, that in many inſtances, the good we enjoy ariſes from circumſtances, independent of human prudence and foreſight; it was to the care of this kind ſtranger, that we were enabled to purſue our way; repairing our misfortunes whilſt I ſat alone beneath the ſhelter of a hedge—my little grand-child extended on my knees, whoſe life ſeemed departing with every breath. My watchings and my care however were not in vain, for my grand-child was preſerved to taſte of future ſorrows. Having finiſhed my leſſons at Northampton, where Clarke, my child's huſband, joined me and added to my expence, I was uncertain what to do; when a letter from my eldeſt ſon, who was at Birmingham, inclined me to go to him. We reached Birmingham; I and my two infants, with Clarke, whoſe life ſeemed iſſuing out at every ſtep, having burſt a blood veſſel before he began the journey. My youngeſt ſon (who excelled peculiarly in land-ſcape painting, and was employ'd as an artiſt in that line) here called on me; being on his

way to Ireland to take views of the lakes, and other beautiful ſcenes in that country. His ſtay with me was very ſhort; but he requeſted that Clarke and his eldeſt brother would endeavour to make me happy; adding, that at his return, (which ſhould not exceed two months) he would take me and my dependant infants back with him to London; where he had been promiſed a ſituation (altho' a young artiſt) that inſured him three hundred a year. How bright was the proſpect; for he was my deareſt child!—A letter came—this favourite ſon was in the ſilent grave!—in mercy perhaps removed from ſorrow to brighter ſcenes, ſurpaſſing even thoſe his elevated fancy formed, or that his magic pencil drew!

Whilſt my heart was yet bleeding with this freſh wound, my eldeſt ſon and Clarke left me; having however promiſed to remit a guinea a week, with which (they ſaid) and with what I could myſelf obtain by teaching, I might live comfortably, altho' another grand-child, of whom he was the father, was alſo added to my cares. A few guineas only came—Clarke died at Derby; and ſome months after I was informed from Dover, that my ſon was on his

way

way to France:—if he be dead, I know not; but a year and ten months are paſſed ſince he left me, friendleſs and forlorn!—It was at this period, Madam, that (like Niobe in tears) I was firſt introduced to your notice.—For four generations had I known your family in Scotland; and experienced the balm of their ſympathy in my adverſe fortune:—to whom, with ſo much propriety could I make my ſorrows known, as to the living image of my former friends; for alas! I have been long a mourner under the ſevere effects of that curſe, pronounced by the Romans of old,—"*May he outlive his friends*"!

Since that time, Madam, you have known the nature of my ſufferings: I have not been poor in the common acceptation: my ſituation at Birmingham, in a diſmal apartment in an upper ſtory, ſecluded from the world, and almoſt from the reviving influence of day, ſcarcely poſſeſſing the comfort of a life, with few remaining clothes to cover me. In this ſituation, Madam, reduced by ſickneſs and by famine, and ſurrounded by three famiſh'd children (with many other accompaniments of woe) have I often fancied myſelf the living

image

image of Count Ugolino, in Sir Joſhua's cavern of deſpair: thankfully ſhould I now have received the fragments from the profuſion of my father's former table: a ſtrange contraſt, my preſent fate, from that which might have been anticipated for the Grand-child of a King!

One grand-daughter being now removed into Scotland; and another, (after long ſufferings) "paſſed peaceably into heaven," my preſent cares are, at this time, reduced to thoſe of providing for myſelf, and two remaining infants: my years, however, diſqualify me for a laborious attention even to my favorite arts; and my imagination involuntarily wandering back to former ſcenes of ſorrow,—dwelling "on the tale of the times of old, the deeds of days of other years," is inſenſibly become leſs capable of new creations, even in my former delightful works of fancy. Thus deprived of my children—abandoned by the world—and deſerted (as it were) by myſelf; I thankfully, and joyfully accept your propoſal of preſenting my caſe to the Court, to the Dukes of Richmond, and of Grafton; who are each, like me,

me, deſcended from a King; but not like me, the miſerable inheritor of his misfortunes!

Thus, Madam, I reſign to you the conduct of my future fortune. The wealth of nations cannot heal the wounds yet bleeding at my heart; nor can the mines of India, recal my children from the ſilent grave—that grave, to which alone I look for an oblivion of my cares! Yet, Madam, by your interpoſition, perhaps I yet may paſs in peace the future cloſing ſcenes of life, whilſt one mild gleam "of ſetting light, ſhines on my evening "hours."

Hannah Robertſon.

BIRMINGHAM, Oct. 15th, 1791.

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